@NET NEWS

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from the anarchist -- -- computer network

Latest From Chiapas

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From: El Lokal <ellokal@pangea.upc.es>
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You've probably all seen this on the news already, but for those of you who haven't..

VICENTE GUERRERO, Mexico (AP) — Masked Indian peasants, some in brown rebel fatigues, felled trees across highways and barricaded towns and villages Monday in southern Chiapas state, where guerrillaas have threateneed to renew an insurgency following a disputed election. The peasant action coincided with an announcement by the rebel leader that thousands of Indian rebel troops had left their mountain stronghold and moved into 38 towns across the southern state. He did not say whether an offensive was planned. The rebel leader (sic) who goes by the nom de guerre of Subcommandante Marcos, announced the troop movement at a jungle news conference Monday, just days after he declared an 11-month-old truce with the government null and void. The movements would be the first major shift of rebel foces since the Zapatista National Liberation Army rose up in Chiapas last Jan. 1 to demand better conditions for Mexico's impoverished peasants. The ensuing 12-day shooting war with the Mexican army cost more than 145 lives. There was no immediate indication of fighting Monday, but there were numerous reports that Indian peasants, many carrying rifles and wearing the rebel' trademark brown fatigues, bandannas and ski masks, had set up blockades on highways in outlying communities. Authorities said more than 600 Indian peasants, none of them rebels, had taken part in the peacful highway blockades. "In this free and rebel territory, we prohibit the entry of military peronnel, of public security, judicial police... or any person from the government," read a banner across one road leading from San Cristobal de las Casas, the city the rebels seized at the start of their armed rebellion. [Man I would like to see that banner hanging across my street....] Three huge banners on the highway to the state capital, Tuxtla Gutierrez, proclaimed: "Welcome to Zapatista territory." About 55 miles outside San Cristobal de las casas, armed Indians peacefully took over the city hall in the town of Simojevel de Allende, according to local news reports.
"Simojovel de Allende awoke with the news that a Zapatista group and taken the town hall at 2 a.m.," said resident Adan Peres Altuzar by telephone. "There is about 50 of them, completely armed, with all the characteristics of the rebels that appeared last January." Marcos told reporters that "thousands" of rebels had slipped out of the Chiapas jungle between Dec. 11 and Dec. 14 entering communities that support the Zapatistas. Marcos said the rebels were "fortifying" the communities on Monday for possible attacks by Mexican army trooops. He said he decided to take action because the 40,000 soldiers surrounding the rebels in their mountain stronghold bordering Guatemala appeared ready to attack. He gave no evidence to support that claim. He rejected as "insufficient" a proposal by President Ernesto Zedillo to create a seven-member, multiparty peace commission to meet with rebels. The possibility of renewed ifghting grew Dec. 8 with the inaguration of Chiapas Gov. Eduardo Robledo Rincon, candidate of Mexico's ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party.

Marcos charged that Robledo Rincon had won by fraud and said the Zapatistas considered the cease-fire broken with his inauguration. Amado

Avendano Figueroa, the opposition candidate for governor who says Robledo robbed him of victory, set up a "Transition Government in Rebellion" earlier this month in San Cristobal de las Casas. Several towns in Chiapas subsequently declared their autonomy from Robledo Rincon's government and pledged allegiance to Avendano. Avendano is not affiliated with the rebels, but he has championed land and other reforms for poor Indians. Marcos called on the federal government to recognize Avendano's government as the legitimate authority in Chiapas. " ...I guess the Zapatistas are making their move with or without any help from any alleged North American "Revolutionary Unions" Goddess run with them and guide them toward the path of Revolution and not reform...
wobbly@liberty.com

Anarchy in the UK 94

-by Ian Heavens

This began Friday, 20th October, and I left on Wednesday - it continued until Sunday 29th October.

Saturday was the annual anarchist bookfair in Conway Hall, a meeting place for all sorts of radical groups in central London. This was my first visit, but I'm told it was much busier than last year - there was hardly room for all the stalls in the hall and corridors, and the place was heaving with people, at least a thousand, I would say, must have visited it during the course of the day - there were several hundred there at any one time and it remained busy until near the closing time of 8 p.m.

Exhibitors included Freedom, Class War, DS4, Anarchy Distributions, A K Press, Kate Sharpley Library, Extreme Books, Drunken Boat, Perennial Books (last 3 from U.S.), Solidarity Federation (ex-Direct Action Movement), Counter Information and Scottish Anarchists, Anarchist Black Cross, Phoenix Press, Pirate Press (Sheffield), IWW, Libertarian Education, Green Anarchist, Bad Attitude (anarchafeminist), and more.

On Sunday an attempted levitation of parliament occurred outside the hideous building itself. Again, an impressive number of people for an anarchist demonstration (500?) right in front of the seat of power. It was claimed that the buildings wobbled; some blamed the failure to levitate on the bad karma of the police, but the truth of the matter is that holding the levitation on a Sunday - when the building is empty -is doomed to failure; it needs the help of all the hot air and windbags inside. Some flags were burnt but to be honest, not much happened - and what could, really?

Monday we held workshops on computer networking and held discussions with publishers and other BBSes (the latter on Tuesday), and narrowly missed appearing on the film of the festival.

On Tuesday I went to an exhibition of Clifford Harper's art and Crass artwork - brilliant; also an exhibition of Spanish anarchism from the death of Franco to the present day, a most impressive collection of 25 panels first put together for the anarchist exposicion in Barcelona last September (apparently 100 panels originally).

Wa it a success? There were anarchists from all over: Ireland, Scotland, England, Greece, a lot of Spaniards, the U.S., Holland, France, Sweden, and so on. It was great for Spunk Press, and I was able to meet a lot of people with whom I'd previously correspondend by email. it was a tremendous buzz to be in London with so many anarchists - I just kept bumping into them on the streets. Some organisations (London Psychogeographical Association, Neoist Alliance, etc.) boycotted it, because of its (to my mind) necessarily broad nature, and the controversial character of its prime instigator, Ian Bone (founder of Class War). The opportunity to create contacts and exchange ideas I think justifies such a large meeting of anarchists, though good organisation is essential.

Organisation

There was a truly impressive program of events, and good groundwork and preparation, but a lack of coordination and communication. There were no clear places to go for information; many events were late or did not take place; there was a daily bulletin, but no obvious place to get it. Caveat: my movements were restricted, so I may just have not got to know

stuff, but the program could have been more explicit about how to find about changes.

Having said that, it was a daunting number of events to put on, and credit should go to the organisers. The events took place in dozens of places around London, adding to the difficulty. I saw some very harrassed people working very hard indeed to get things going (as usual, many people didn't get involved). Particularly impressive was the success in getting accomodation for a large number; I personally visited the squat of an empty legal aid centre with space for sixty people. The daily bulletin is a great idea, too.

Interestingly, it is the anarchosyndicalists such as the SAC from Sweden or the Spanish who expect a higher standard of organisation - I think they are used to dealing with much larger numbers of people.

Those present with email access have agreed to post our reports so that as full a picture of the conference /festival emerges. Spunk Press will maintain an "events" directory with an "Anarchy_UK" subdirectory, in which all reports will be placed (other similar gatherings can do the same).

Musicwise, there was piles of anarchopunk, but as a jazz playing friend pointed out, no 'free/contemporary' jazz, surely the most anarchic music on the planet, every exponent of which must qualify as an anarchist. Nice to involve this community too, which is well represented in London.

Hopefully many things can be learnt and applied to the next such gathering.

Language Problems

One problem with the festival is that the working language was exclusively English. An international anarchist conference attracts a lot of non English speakers, particularly from the Spanish speaking world, historically and probably currently the largest anarchist population in existence, which does not usually speak English.

Failure to address this makes the festival almost useless for a number of people who have made long and expensive journeys, reinforces the Anglocentrism of these gatherings, alienates non English speakers, and does not allow the free exchange of ideas between otherwise separated anarchist movements, a prime aim of these gatherings.

Computer Networking Workshops

Three of these were held

1. an introduction to computer networking 2. a discussion with publishers about electronic publishing 3. a discussion about BBSes and networking among those already using it.

The themes of the workshop were good, and they were to a large extent successful; preparation was difficult, as the organisers were a collection of net people who had not had the opportunity to meet previously.

This attracted about 50 or 60 people. It was very informal owing to my total lack of preparation. Luckily the eight or so of us with net access were able to collaborate. After a short introduction the workshop just followed the questions of the audience. We concentrated on the positive uses of networking and practical advice rather than technical details. More information for people wanting to get connected would be useful. There were useful comments from others about the problems with the extent of information on the net - how do you know what is interesting once you are connected?

We all described our different perspectives, a useful spread from Spunk Press (electronic publishing on the net), Extreme Books (anarchist BBS, catalogues and internet access), Fast Breeder (local BBS), WSM (use of the net by anarchist group).

Demonstration was tricky; we only had a portable Macintosh. It was possible with small groups. A neat offline demo of WWW set up by Jack Jansen was aborted as I lost the disks the night before. People seemed more interested in discussing the technology.

Bulletin Boards and Networking Workshop

This was attended by people from ECN (London and Berlin), BBSes in Barcelona, the WSM, Extreme Books, Spunk Press (others?).

Some of the discussion was about Spunk Press. We made our commitment clear to take material in any language, and explained that all groups were autonomous in that we had no editorial policy; all information is accepted - though ephemeral information is not so appropriate. Disk space is not an issue, as we can find as much as is needed on machines on the internet; the Spunk Press archive is distributed to BBSes, and on PC disks, and the recipients can choose how much of the archive to keep. We are committed [I think? subject to discussion] to accepting as wide a range of anarchist material as possible (someone asked if we would take Class War - of course).

Chris from ECN London was interested in technical help in getting connected; currently they have to wait for ECN Berlin to come over to London! We agreed the need for a resource to help with practical advice; also the wider distribution of anarchist contacts for people to access when they need advice (before and once connected to the net). A modified form of the Spunk Press contact list would help people sift out useful contacts and information. This needs some kind of non-net contact by phone or letter, and available from some address - perhaps published by A K Press?

The point was made by ECN Berlin that the distribution of information in this way does not connect to activism; indeed that the use of the internet to coordinate activities, e.g. around the Chiapas rising, isn't much use when local movements are too weak to act on the information. We distinguished Spunk Press as an educational organisation with a necessarily narrow focus.

ECN Berlin made the most interesting point that Internet mailing lists and newsgroups are of little use when they do not involve people who are already working together. The setting up of mailing lists around specific issues (thanks Andrew from WSM) and in geographically localised areas - e.g. for the Scottish Anarchist Federation, or over the U.K. - would address this. Essentially, I think we have become too attached to the Internet as a global entity; while useful for information retrieval, communication is better achieved over smaller distances, or over single issues. This requires more people to set up and maintain mailing lists. We can learn from the BBS world, who are necessarily slanted towards local contacts. Addition of BBSes to the anarchist net contact list (or maintenance of a separate list) would help redress this (I personally am going to dial in to more BBSes without internet contact to shed some of my Internetcentrism).

Manuelo from Barcelona described the anarchist networking in Spain; two internet nodes in Madrid and Barcelona and some BBSes. ECN Berlin described their network (I forget these details).

Australian Anarchist Computer Network

The australian anarchist computer network is happening!

So far, we've got a bbs (computer bulletin board service) inbrisbane and one in melbourne. Sydney anarchists are working towards getting one happening there soon. Hopefully there will be an internet connection in darwin soon too.

This means anarchists in brisbane can send messages to anarchists in melbourne, or anywhere in the world, via internet for the cost of a local phone call. (In one call, you can send and receive dozens ofmessages.)

The two bulletin boards also get regular news bulletins from around the world. So far, we've got spanish-language news coming in from El Lokal in barcelona and italian-language news coming in from European Counter Network in italy. We're working on linking up with more anarchist groups internationally and developing a regular international anarchist news service.

We also maintain an archive of anarchist and related text files in computer format. These are available directly from the bbss or via internet email. Send email to:

archive-server@xchange.apana.org.au
or
archive-server@byteback.apana.org.au
with:

help

in the body of the message.

We will also have the complete Spunk Press archive very soon.

In brisbane, you can just walk into Holus Bolus anarchist bookshopand use the computer. This will eventually be the case in sydney and melbourne too.

For more information, send email to:
agitator@xchange.apana.org.au

or call:
the xchange bbs (melbourne):
03-383 3094
byte back bbs (brisbane):
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